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RNR 873

BREZHNEV (REPEAT 869)

MOSCOW, SEPT 2, REUTER -- SOVIET TELEVISION TONIGHT SHOWED SOVIET PARTY LEADER LEONID BREZHNEV LOOKING FIT AND WELL AFTER TAKING PART IN A KREMLIN CEREMONY 24 HOURS AFTER WESTERN REPORTS SAID HE WAS UNWELL.

THE 67-YEAR-OLD KREMLIN CHIEF ATTENDED THE AWARDING OF HIGH PARTY HONORS TO A FELLOW POLIBURO MEMBER, VIKTOR GRISHIN, WHO IS FIRST SECRETARY OF THE MOSCOW PARTY COMMITTEE.

MR BREZHNEV EMBRACED MR GRISHIN AND SHOOK HANDS FOLLOWING THE CEREMONY, WHICH WAS CONDUCTED BY PRESIDENT NIKOLAI PODGORNY IN THE PRESENCE OF THE FULL POLIBURO.

A VISITING IRAQI DELEGATION IN MOSCOW LAST WEEK FAILED TO OBTAIN THEIR EXPECTED APPOINTMENT WITH MR BREZHNEV AND, ACCORDING TO ONE ARAB SOURCE, THE REASON GIVEN WAS ILL-HEALTH.

A SECOND ARAB VERSION, HOWEVER, INDICATED THAT MR BREZHNEV WAS TOO BUSY.

RUMORS OF MR BREZHNEV'S ILL HEALTH -- APPARENTLY DISPROVED BY TONIGHT'S TV SHOWING -- COINCIDED WITH AN UNUSUALLY QUIET PERIOD IN SOVIET POLITICAL LIFE DATING FROM THE RESIGNATION OF FORMER PRESIDENT NIXON.

MORE 1614

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RNR 873

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MR BREZHNEV APPEARS TO OBSERVERS HERE TO BE IN GENERALLY GOOD HEALTH, ALTHOUGH TWO YEARS AGO HE DROPPED OUT OF SIGHT FOR FIVE WEEKS AND IT WAS LATER RUMORED HE HAD RECOVERED FROM A SLIGHT STROKE.

IN MAY THIS YEAR HE CANCELLED A MEETING WITH AUSTRIAN CHANCELLOR BRUNO KREISKY BECAUSE OF INFLUENZA.

REUTER 1615